

## **2007 Annual Report**

### **Quality Improvement Committees**

#### **Organizational Principles**

Members on Quality Improvement (QI) Committees are “informed evaluators” that can give the Department of Human Services administration the best, most objective analysis about where the system needs improvement. They are “educated consumers” who can provide legitimacy for the system and counteract rhetoric and inaccurate information disseminated about the child welfare system.

QICs are part of our open system, and are able to analyze outcomes and make realistic suggestions for system improvement. They provide “fresh eyes” that evaluate our service delivery system and identify where service delivery systems may be entrenched in maintaining the “status quo”. They have the knowledge and ability to see organizational obstacles that may have been “normalized” by the system; have the ability to recognize system strengths; and will communicate those strengths to the community.

QICs will offer solutions to unique problems, and therefore must have independence to advocate for unique community needs.

#### **Introduction**

Each of the five Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) regions is required to establish, maintain and support a local Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) responsible for reviewing and supporting activities expected of CPS Citizen Review Panels (CRP) as mandated by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

The DCFS state office is also responsible for the establishment, maintenance and support of a statewide QIC and responds to all recommendations, questions, and concerns delivered to it within 30 days. The statewide QIC serves as the conduit for information and ideas presented by regional QICs. They develop, operate, update and maintain the QIC website designed to aid in convenient access to information.

Each committee is coordinated by a citizen chair and is composed of citizen and community partners living or practicing within a region’s jurisdiction. Each QIC is required to convene at least 10 monthly meetings every year. At least yearly QICs invite the following agencies to a committee meeting and receive reports that relate to child welfare trends or the status of child welfare services.

- The Office of Services Review that will report on Qualitative Case Review and Case Process Review outcomes.
- The Office of Child Protection Ombudsman that will report on trends pertaining to client and consumer complaints about services delivered by the division.

- The Department of Human Services Fatality Review Committees that will present the Fatality Review Report.

Committees may use DCFS policies, procedures, data, and case review information to develop recommendations designed to improve processes and outcomes relating to the division's foster care, in-home, transition to adult living, domestic violence, kinship and other division programs and services. Acting as the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, committees examine policies, procedures, and practices, and specific Child Protective Service cases to evaluate the extent to which the child protective services system is successfully discharging protection responsibilities in accordance with provision specified in 107.c of the Act.

Each QIC produces a quarterly summary, submitted to division administration that includes a description of:

- Data reviewed
- Public relation activities
- Special studies conducted
- CPS and Domestic Violence related issues
- Involvement in the Qualitative Case Review process.

Three committees forwarded recommendations regarding suggested improvements to the organization or practice to DCFS administration. In all cases, DCFS responded to those recommendations within 30 days. Those recommendations and DCFS responses are summarized below.

## **Annual Meeting**

The Second Annual Quality Improvement Summit was held on November 28, 2007 in Salt Lake City, Utah. About 100 Quality Improvement Committee members from all over the state attended this day-long event. In summary, members were reminded that their primary roles are to act as educated critics, make recommendations regarding system change, and advocate for the child welfare system in Utah.

Overall, community partners believe that the citizen involvement realized from the QIC process has improved the child welfare system. Members reiterated their commitment to the QIC process and identified the following reasons for being part of a QIC:

- To be advocates and affect outcomes for children as well as to be part of solutions that help children
- To help the community understand DCFS by informing them of child welfare issues and involving the community in their solution
- Because they are invested in DCFS and the programs and services it provides
- To know what DCFS best practice are and to understand their uses
- To promote a better sense of community with an eye on improving the quality of services.

Members recognize a successful statewide assessment requires stakeholder involvement and committed themselves to providing help with onsite reviews. They recognize the need for members to be more involved in the legislative process. Likewise, they identified the need to recruit members from outside the child welfare community, members who can think “out of the box” and can help enlist support from a wider community base.

## QIC Recommendations and DCFS Responses to Recommendations

State Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
Lisa McDonald	Christmas Box International
Carolyn Jensen	Children’s Justice Center
Mary Ogan,	Salt Lake CAP Head Start
Katie Gregory	Assistant Juvenile Court Administrator
Karla Pardini	Jeene Wagner Lake Jewish Community Center
Karen Buchi, M.D	Department of Pediatrics University of Utah
Julie Steele	Department of Pediatrics University of Utah
Emily Hollingshead	Business Owner/Web Designer
F. Richards Smith	Attorney Guardian ad Litem
Stephen Clark	Attorney Jones Waldo Holbrook and McDonough
Robert Miller	State Vice Chair Democratic Party
Trish Beck	Former State Legislator
Glen Lambert	Odyssey House
Amy Relf	Child and Family Services
Katy Larsen	Child and Family Services
Carol Miller	Child and Family Services

On January 3, 2008, the State Quality Improvement Committee submitted a letter (see [recommendation letter](#)) to the Child and Family Services Administrative Team that contained several recommendations relating to In-Home Services and substance abuse issues. The Administrative Team issued a reply to that Committee’s recommendations (see [response letter](#)) on February 3, 2008. Recommendations made by the committee and DCFS’ response is as follows:

### In-Home Services:

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Division write separate practice guidelines related to kinship cases/care.

**Response:** Our current guidelines [http://www.dcfh.utah.gov/guidelines\\_rules.htm](http://www.dcfh.utah.gov/guidelines_rules.htm) do contain separate practice guidelines related to kinship cases/care. Section 500 was created out of the necessity to recognize that when children are placed with a relative caregiver; they are in an out-of-home placement similar to, but not the same as, foster care with a non-relative. These

guidelines give information about what the caseworker needs to be doing when a relative has been granted temporary custody from the juvenile court, differentiating it from in-home services where a child remains with their parent/guardian. There are areas of these guidelines that we are currently working to revise to give more clear information on how to help determine the best kinship placement when there is more than one family that comes forward expressing an interest and also to ensure that the appropriate background screening is being completed prior to placement. There may be further revisions if current legislation (HB 36) passes that would allow us to place with relatives more quickly and have the child remain in our custody for an assessment period to help the relatives make a choice on whether to become licensed or to request custody from the court. Child and Family Services is very supportive of this change in legislation.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that a system be devised to follow the recommendations of the workload study so that staff are not overloaded.

**Response:** We agree that Child and Family Services needs to work toward implementing the recommendations of the workload study with regard to in-home cases. Currently a workgroup has been working on definitions of the various in-home services to bring standardization to the regions. Some in-home codes (CIS, CCS for example) are not applied consistently and different services are provided under the same code. Until a standard definition and practice is defined for each code, Child and Family Services cannot set caseload (workload) standards for in-home cases. Until then, we will continue to use the standard developed by the Legislative Auditor (15 cases).

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Division develop a system to distinguish PSS cases where the children are living with their parents from those receiving PSS services as a result of being placed with kin.

**Response:** Currently our SAFE development team is developing an alternative to a new case type to be able to differentiate between a court ordered in-home services case and a court ordered case where temporary custody has been granted to a relative. We will be able to track all children placed with kin caregivers and prompt the activities that are needed to ensure each child is receiving the attention needed to ensure their safety and well-being while working with the caregiver and family on permanency planning. With the sophistication of our SAFE system the past few years, we have come to recognize that this alternative to creating a KSS case type for tracking will make it so that our focus on kinship is on practice issues with working with the family and not on linking and duplicating efforts for tracking information in our system with a new case type.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the children in a kin placement be counted as individuals rather than as a family count.

**Response:** As with all the issues related to kinship care, a child specific focus and increased support to the caregiver are two of the primary issues that we are addressing in the system. We support the recommendation from the QIC that we count every individual child that is in a kin placement and ensure that we are attending to their individualized needs. We will be creating within SAFE notifications and/or action items that will prompt caseworkers to have similar requirements for working with children in a kin placement as we do for children in foster care.

An example is for there to be a conversation with the child outside the presence of the caregiver each month as required by the case process review.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that consideration be given to increasing the amount of client contact required for kinship cases. It is recommended that consideration be given to increasing the amount of client contact required for PSS cases.

**Response:** We support the recommendation that we take into consideration increasing the amount of client contact that is required for any in-home service case where a child remains with a family that has been in crisis. There is a current In-Home Workgroup chartered by the administrative team that is looking at practice guidelines and making recommendations for improving practice in working with families. This information will be given to the workgroup so that they can incorporate this into other recommendations they are making to strengthen our in-home services.

#### **Substance Abuse:**

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that a subcommittee of the QI committee be supported to develop multidisciplinary training across the state.

**Response:** Child and Family Services is happy to support a subcommittee being formed to develop multidisciplinary training that will include ways to:

- Ensure a consistent response by law enforcement and CPS staff on cases of newborns alleged to have been exposed to substances
- Increase the emphasis on recording accurate data regarding contributing factors in the SAFE data-base
- Inform the attendees of the time parameters under which parents must show substantial progress to have their children returned to their custody/care. We also appreciate your suggestion to gather information from the attendees about their needs for additional training or resource information related to substance abuse.

Darren Burdette, CPS program manager and Mary Catherine Jones from the professional development team have been informed they will participate on the subcommittee. \$5800 has been secured to fund the travel and per-diem for members of the subcommittee who will provide multidisciplinary training across the state. This funding will also pay for lunch for the trainings. Funding for this project comes from a grant and as such needs to be spent by Oct 1, 2008.

The State Quality Improvement Committee also made recommendations relating to the Child and Family Services Intake system. Those recommendations were published online (<http://www.utahqic.utah.gov/StateQICommittee.html>) and are summarized as follows:

**Recommendation:** Create a workgroup of intake and CPS staffs that can further analyze and make changes to the practice guidelines for intake. Some agreements need to be made across the state about the threshold for accepting a case in certain categories wherever some hard and fast standards can be determined. It was suggested that environmental neglect guidelines be tied to the child's age/development in terms of being an acceptable case.

**Response:** Just to let you know, the environmental neglect guidelines for intake (201.9) have been revised and are available at our website <http://www.hspolicy.utah.gov/dcf/>. Cora will be meeting with regions to discuss the impact of the changes in these guidelines. A workgroup met

for several months two years ago and focused on bringing consistency in practice guidelines for Intake. The workgroup recommended a change in the format of the written guidelines that have been reviewed by the administrative team as acceptable for Intake but would not fit for formatting other program areas so we did not move forward with releasing the newly formatted guidelines. There was a positive outcome with the workgroup in that when they were meeting together, they did come to agreements on some of the challenging areas of Intake. We will review the work product and compare it with existing guidelines again and coordinate with the region Intake Supervisors to determine if there are further recommendations that can be incorporated to assist with consistency in practice. One of the challenges in Intake is that state statute is very broad in addressing what information is required to accept a referral for child abuse, neglect, or dependency. There may not be a way in guidelines to create “hard and fast” standards because some of the areas that have been brought to our attention, including environmental neglect, child endangerment, teens engaged in unlawful sexual behavior, out of home perpetrators, and teen/parent conflicts. These are all complex issues that have to be reviewed on their own merit within the standards of the laws that require a response for Child and Family Services whenever there is a concern of abuse, neglect, or dependency. Written guidelines can assist our staff in making determinations but they won’t, by themselves, alleviate the concerns about how each region interprets them. The Safety Decision Making Model which is now in development will hopefully assist us in integrating how threats of harm, child vulnerability and protective capacities are the factors that must be assessed when responding to concerns regarding a child from Intake through all program areas.

**Recommendation 2:** Once those standards and guidelines have been developed and the agreements are made, host a statewide training summit for all intake staff.

**Response:** We would reserve the time for a statewide summit to be at the culmination of rolling out the Safety Decision Model into Intake practice through formal training. However, there are ways to bring more collaboration across regions in Intake through hosting conference calls and providing regional guideline discussions. Cora will be following up with this with a proposal to the administrative team.

**Recommendation:** Develop an intake specific training module for new employees as well as training for experienced staff that become intake staff. The committee was impressed by the value of staff interactions and mentoring that is a part of the intake process.

**Response:** We absolutely agree with this recommendation and believe that it would be best to wait to have the Safety Decision Making Model ready to roll out with the training so that there isn’t training on current practice only to be redone a few months later when this is integrated.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Division consider how to “build in” coverage for intake units on a routine basis, allowing them to have staff meetings, trainings, and retreats. At the present time, the intake teams feel that they have to “call in favors” for coverage when the Division should establish some infrastructure for support intake.

**1**This recommendation has been taken to the state administrative team for the Region Directors to have an opportunity to address this issue in each region. There is a need for Intake coverage and regions have the ability to provide this courtesy within the current infrastructure of the regions. We can follow up with the Region Directors to ensure there is a plan in place that meets the needs of intake staff.

Eastern Region/Price Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
John Behn	Boy Scouts of America
Rick Shaw	Sun Advocate General Manager
Melissa Hamilton	Principal Bruin Point Elementary
Kari Larsen	GAL Office
Shelley Wright	Family Support/CJC Director
Rhonda Peterson	Carbon County
Lisa Branch	Local Interagency Council/Foster Parent
Jeff Olinger	Department of Workforce Services
Heather Ogden	Utah Foster Care Foundation/CCSD
Annie Stacy	Therapist Four Corners Behavioral Health
Rulinda Sanderson	

**Recommendation:** On October 30, 2007, the Eastern Region/Price QIC issued a proposal suggesting changes in the respite care system for foster parents ([letter](#)).

**Response:** Child and Family Services responded and approved a regional pilot project for approximately 12 months to test the effect of these changes.

On October 30, 2007, the Eastern Region/Price QIC submitted a list of questions (see [letter](#)) relating to employee retention. Child and Family Services responded (see [response letter](#)) on February 3, 2008 addressing those questions and recommendations.

**Question:** Why are there no accommodations for staff that wish to make DCFS their career, such as longevity and merit raises?

**Response:** The rules of longevity are determined by the Department of Human Resources and apply to all state employees. Merit raises can only be approved by the state legislature. Child and Family Services is working on a proposal for a type of career ladder system, similar to that of the Department of Education. This proposal will be made in the 2009 legislative session.

**Question:** Given the work DCFS does, the paperwork and licensure required, why are they not paid more as a child welfare social worker over other social work jobs?

**Response:** It is difficult to truly convey the differences when comparing our staff to other Divisions within the Department of Human Services. Child welfare social workers are indexed the same as other social workers. Risk, stress, paperwork requirements and the magnitude of the decisions our staff have to make will be included in the proposal for the “career ladder” system at next year’s legislative session.

**Question:** Whose job is it to work with the legislature to provide raises for social workers that work for DCFS?

**Response:** The responsibility lies with both the administration of the Division of Child and Family Services as well as the executive director of the department of Human Services. One of the difficulties is possible inequity within the Department of Human Services if Child and Family Services social workers were to receive a raise. Child and Family Services administration

continues to work within the department toward a reasonable goal of increased compensation and equity. Once we have the proposal for a new career ladder type of system prepared, it will be shared with quality improvement committees. QIC citizen member advocacy activities that support and fund this system would be greatly appreciated.

The remainder of your letter was a list of wonderful suggestions. Unfortunately, the majority of them are not within our ability to change. They are controlled either by the legislature or the Division of Facilities Management. Rest assured that they will be considered for inclusion in the career ladder proposal as mentioned above.

The suggestions we do have control of are the following:

**Recommendation:** Have the Safe screen not pop up with the red notification as being the first thing seen when turning it on. This serves as a reminder of all you are not doing right.

**Response:** We do try to be strengths based in our approach with staff much as we hope they are strengths based with their clients. These notifications had been programmed this way so that workers could not miss the notice of a deadline. We appreciate your observations of negativity and will have the SAFE team investigate potential alternatives.

**Recommendation:** Ensure workers caseload remains manageable.

**Response:** A workload study of all program areas was recently completed. We are happy to share this with your committee. We realize that employee retention goes hand in hand with ensuring manageable caseloads. One of the building blocks we are pursuing this current legislative session is the request for 18 additional full time employees including 14 caseworkers, 2 supervisors and 2 support staff. The number for the request was based on tracking of staff and caseload ratios statewide.

Eastern Region/Uintah Basin Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
Brian Raymond	Daggett County
Carolyn Watson	Prime Time 4 Kids
Cindy Warren	Roosevelt Housing Authority
Clark Kendall	Active Re-entry
Dan Wheeler	Vocational Rehabilitation
Deb Smith	Child and Family Services
Jason Rasmussen	Foster Grandparent Program
Jeanie Tobert	Uintah Basin Applied Technology
Kathy Reel	Ute Tribe Headstart
Lynda Schade	Utah State University Extension for Duchesne County
Lynn Bigelow	Adult and Aging Services
Lynn Whitman	Division of Services for People With Disabilities
Margo Weeks	Department of Workforce Services
Marsha Perry	Northeastern Counseling Center
Matt Watkins	Child and Family Services



Pam Webster	Domestic Violence Coordinator
Pam Womack	Heat Program
Ronda Olsen	Utah State University Extension
Sandy Schurz	Early Childhood Program Duchesne
Suzanne Prevedel	Duchesne County Adult Education
Valle Mortenson	Tri County Health
Vanessa Liesik	DDI Vantage
Wendy Simmons	Department of Workforce Services, Roosevelt

The Eastern Region, Uintah Basin QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

Northern Region Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
Brenda Durtschi-Chair	Utah Foster Care Foundation
Carol Baumann	DCFS Regional Director
Estelle Dahlkemper	Community Volunteer
Phil Castle	Director YIC, Davis Co. Schools
Cindy Havlicek	Guardian Ad-Litem
Joyce Booth	Paralegal - Office of Attorney General
Shauna Riley	Weber Human Services
Jeff Tesch	Clinician –Headstart
Eileen Nicholas	Ogden School District
Tim Frost	Bear River Mental Health
Rhett Fronk	Christmas Box House – Director
Debee Gold	Davis Behavioral Health
Mary Francisco	Foster and Healthy Children
Sarah Pomeroy	DCFS – TAL Supervisor
Patty Conner-Rose	The Christmas Box House
Pam Clark	Family Support Center
Nancy Xenede Card	Community Volunteer
Sally Jones	McKay Dee Hospital
Sally Powell	Regional Administrator – AP&P
Teresa Fowers	Licensing Specialist – Office of Licensing
Linda Melton	Foster Parent
Daryl Melton	Foster Parent
Emily Redd	Community Volunteer
Bob Burch	Foster Parent
Lynell Packer	Community Volunteer – “Prayer of the Children
Landon Halverson	Ogden City Corporation
Marian Scothern	DCFS Administrative Assistant

The Northern Region QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

<b>Salt Lake Valley Region Quality Improvement Committee Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Annette Jan	Attorney General's Office
Chris Chytraus Chair	Fostering Healthy Children
Curt Hansen	Granite School District
Daniel Mata	Centro de la Familia
Dawn Prince	Child and Family Services
JJ Glazier	Child and Family Services
Karen Hansen, M.D	Primary Children's Medical Center
Keri Jones	Children's Services, YWCA
Kristin Fadel	Guardian ad Litem
Marcella Rodriguez	The Road Home
Marjean Searcy	Salt Lake City Police Department—Meth Initiative
Mark Weisbender	Silverado Counseling
Patricia Worthington	Foster Care Citizen Review Board
Peggy Jerome	Primary Care Family Therapy
Roland Oliver	Child and Family Services
Shannon Nelson	Family Support Center
Sharon Graser	Department of Youth Services
Steve Leyba	Department of Workforce Services
Stephanie Steele	The Sharing Place

The Salt Lake Valley QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

<b>Southwest Region/Cedar City Quality Improvement Committee Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Emily Hollingshead	
Duane Jarvis	South West Center
Joanna Batt	DSPD
Shandra Powell	Family Support Center
Sterling Church	
Mark Hollingshead	
Amy Bates	
Douglas Spencer	
Kyle Garrett	
John Shrum	Department of Workforce Services
Destry Maycock	
Stephanie Furnival	Children's Justice Center
Keith Millet	Cedar City Police Department
Diane Gitz	CASA Coordinator
Debbie Davis	
Denny Heaton	Southwest Education Academy
Annie VanYperen	Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

The Southwest Region/Cedar City QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

Southwest Region/Sevier County Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
Betty Cowley	Private Citizen
Bridget Peterson	Private Citizen
Bruce Zylks	Child and Family Services
Caryn Withers	New Horizon's/Domestic Violence Director
Don & Coylene Brinkerhoff	Foster Parents
Dustin & Marci Davis	Foster Parents
Gail Albrecht	Sevier County School District
Glenda Klein	Private Citizen
Josephine Griffith	Six Counties Senior Citizens
Karen Anderson	Child and Family Services
Karen Payne	Guardian ad Litem/Casa Representative
MaryLee Harrison	Retired Domestic Violence Worker
Melissa Butterfield	Family Support Center
Milo & Connie Medley	Foster Parents, and County Zoning Commissioner
Sharice Barney	Private Citizen
Susan Munk	Department of Workforce Services
Tammy Powell	Juvenile Justice System
Teresa Robinson	Ashman Elementary
Thomas & Dian Chivers	Juvenile Justice System

The Southwest Region/Sevier County QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

Southwest Region/Washington County Quality Improvement Committee Members	
Name	Agency
Chantel Markel (CI/QA Chair)	Realtor Tolbert Nielsen Realty Group
Debbie Hofhines (CI/QA CoChair)	Southwest Region Area Rep. Utah Foster Care Foundation
Tami Fullerton Assistant Program Director	Div. of Juvenile Justice Services
Ms. Trina McCoy Victims Advocate	St. George Police Department
Mr. Greg Loebel	Pilot Community Coordinator
Terry Ogborn	Millcreek High School
Ms. Jennifer Nichols	Justice Court
Mike Carr	Head Counselor Elementary Schools
Biff Lowry	Volunteer
Armondo Parras	Community Member
Sara Boatright	Kinship/Foster Mother

<b>Southwest Region/Washington County Quality Improvement Committee Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Mary Barnes	Casa Volunteer
Ms. Patricia Sheffield	Director CJC
Sandy Cox	Casa Volunteer
Jeff Wilcox, Esq.	Attorney
Madonna Melton	Dove Center
Mickelle Hafen Elementary Counselor	Washington County School Distric
Robert W Johnson	Division of Child & Family Services
Gordon Gunn	Division of Child & Family Services
Thomas Kelly	Division of Child & Family Services

The Southwest Region/Washington County QIC sent no recommendations to the State Administrative Team.

<b>Western Region Quality Improvement Committee Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Dan Grinder	
Laura Blanchard	
Odell Erickson	
Richard Nance	
Ronda Gates	
Barbara McCleary	
John Moody	
Evelyn Cloward	
Vicky Proctor	
LoAn Lee	
Cathy Stauffer	
Jackie Christensen	
Marla Raff	
Barbara Quackenbush	
Monica Hullinger	
Wendy Bunnell	
Liz Peterson	
Cathy Maurer	
Bert Peterson	
Trish Coburn	
Beverly Hart	
Susan Knadler	
Kent Downs	
Brent Platt	
Casey Christopherson	
Emily Huff	
Jared Osmond	
Judy Robertson	
Joy Brough	

On November 6, 2007, the Western Region Quality Improvement Committee submitted recommendations (accessed by [clicking here](#)) to Child and Family Services regarding the licensing process for foster families. Child and Family Services' response to the Western Region Quality Improvement Committee stated "We share the concerns about time delays for potential foster families wanting to become licensed. Our having sufficient numbers and types of foster homes available are critical to our being able to make the most appropriate placement for the children in our care."

That letter provided the following responses to specific recommendations.

**Recommendation:** Make monies available for the Office of Licensing to hire additional staff:

**Response:** We agree with the recommendation and are pleased to report that the Office of Licensing has received permission to add one additional staff person in the current year. This permission came from the Legislature at the request of Lisa-Michele Church. The Office of Licensing has requested additional staff, and these requests are being evaluated prior to the legislative session.

**Recommendation:** Authorize DCFS to assist with home studies for new homes.

**Response:** We accept your recommendations regarding establishing a system for DCFS staff to be authorized to complete home studies for new homes as written. We would like to explore this possibility with the Office of Licensing and the Executive Directors Office within the Department of Human Services. This may or may not be in conflict with the statutory mission of the Office of Licensing and may also conflict with existing rules regarding who can conduct a home study. The bottom line however is that this is a great idea, and one that we want to fully explore. In addition, there is a process improvement committee that has been chartered by the Department to look at the process of licensing from beginning to end. We will ensure that this is one of the proposals that are considered by those on the review committee. Results from this review will be made final within the next three weeks. Once those findings are made public, we will make those available to you for review.

**Recommendation:** DHS should thoroughly evaluate the pros and cons of bringing the office of licensing back under the authority and supervision of the Division of Child and Family Services:

**Response:** We accept this recommendation, and again will ensure that there is every consideration about the most appropriate and effective placement of these responsibilities within the Dept of Human Services. This part of your recommendation becomes even more complex given the already existing statutory creation of the Office of Licensing. I will commit to explore this issue with the Department Executive Director, Lisa-Michele Church, and will report back to the Western Region Quality Improvement Committee at the next available date.